

John (7)

For some weeks we have been considering John's prologue—we come this morning to what may be considered the pinnacle of this introduction—there is a sense in which v18 is both a summary of the previous 17 verses and the remaining 21 chapters—but I could go further and suggest, that v18 is in fact a summary of the entire Bible...

Last week in examining v15 we learned that Christ should get the preeminence—"This was He of whom I said, He who comes after me is preferred before me"—that is—although Christ came after John upon the stage of history—He should be preferred before John—or, He should be esteemed as greater or having more importance...

John then suggests several reasons—[1] v15b—"for He was before me"—that is—He's the eternal word of God who was in the beginning with God, [2] v16—"for of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace"—that is—He's the Father's source of grace for the salvation of sinners, [3] v17—"For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ"—that is—He's the mediator of a new and better covenant which provides all that the law demanded and promised, and [4] v18—"No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him to us"—that is—He is the Godman able to reveal the heart and salvation of the Father...

- I. The Father's Transcendence
- II. The Son's Eternal Generation
- III. The Son's Declaration of the Father

I. The Father's Transcendence

1. V18—"No one has seen God at any time"—that is—no one has ever seen God—[1] physically, and [2] directly...
2. [1] Physically—that is—no man has ever seen God because He's a purely spiritual and thus an invisible being...
3. 1Tim.1:17—"Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, *be* honor and glory forever and ever..."
4. Now—the fact that God is a purely spiritual and thus invisible being—doesn't deny He can be seen in some sense...
5. That is—while God's ESSENCE is invisible His EVIDENCE is seen by the effects of His presence around us...
6. Rom.1:20—"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse..."
7. Here we learn that, in a sense, man can behold God's invisible attributes, in the things that He made in creation...
8. This of course isn't what John is saying—he's speaking about God's essential essence or nature which is spirit...
9. [2] Directly—that is—no man has ever seen God without mediation—He's too glorious and radiant for man...
10. This is likely more to John's point—yes God is invisible—but more than that—He's too glorious for man to behold...
11. Thus—no man has, or can, see God—not merely because He's invisible—but because He's too glorious for man...
12. Ex.33:20-23—"But He said, You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live. 21 And the LORD said, Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. 22 So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. 23 Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen..."
13. Moses had asked God to see or behold His glory—the Lord answers this prayer but only in a partial manner...

14. Now—I trust it's obvious that He's using metamorphic or figurative language—for God doesn't have a face, hand, or back...
15. He's simply teaching Moses that He's too glorious to be seen directly—but can only be seen indirectly or partially...
16. Furthermore—their may also here be an allusion to Christ, as the cleft, in whom we are enabled to know God...
17. 1Tm.6:16—"who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom *be* honor and everlasting power. Amen..."
18. Here—Paul provides some additional commentary on what the phrase—"whom no man has seen or can see..."
19. The reason why—"no one has seen God at any time..."—is because—"He dwells in unapproachable light..."
20. That is—God, in His native or natural essence, is too transcendent, pure, and holy—for man to see and live...
21. Jn.6:46—"Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God; He has seen the Father"—this phrase interprets John 1:18...
22. The Son sees the Father because He shares His essence—He doesn't see Him with physical but spiritual eyes...
23. LBC—"The Lord our God is but one only living and true God; whose subsistence is in and of Himself; infinite in being and perfection; whose essence cannot be comprehended by any but Himself; a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions, who only has immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto..."

II. The Son's Eternal Generation

1. The first thing I want to briefly address is the textual variant—thus some translations have—the only begotten GOD...
2. Now—to be honest—many commentators suggest that the overriding evidence favors—the only begotten God...
3. But either way—I simply intend to do as usual—and that is stick with the translation I use—the New King James...
4. Thus—we are here confronted with—the glorious and mysterious doctrine—of the Son's eternal generation...
5. [1] It's unique—that is—generation or begottenness is unique to the Son—the second person of the Trinity...
6. The Gk word rendered—"the only begotten"—is a compound word made of two words "mono" and "genes"...
7. "Mono" means one or only and "genes" means born—literally the word means—"the one and only born one..."
8. Thus—whatever it means to be "begotten"—there's only one person who's begotten—the second person of the Trinity...
9. Now—let me briefly remind you of two things—there is one God who exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit...
10. Thus—each person possesses the whole of the divine essence—each person is wholly and fully God in Himself...
11. But—in addition to this—there's certain attributes peculiar to each person—that are NOT shared by each person...
12. Thus—the Father and Son share the same divine essence or being—they are both equally and fully God of themselves...
13. But—in addition to this—they each share unique qualities that are limited or peculiar to each divine person...
14. Thus—the word rendered "begotten" literally and simply means "born" or "generated" and refers to origin...

15. The Son relates to the Father in a similar way—a son (or child) derives his existence from his earthly father...
16. V14—"the only begotten of the Father"—that is—"out of the Father" or "from the Father"—He's the Father's Son...
17. Everything that the Son is He is from the Father—He derives His existence "out from" or "of" the first person...
18. Stuart Olyott—"God the Father does not *make* God the Son to be God. He is God in His own right. And yet without God the Father, there would be no person in the Godhead who is God the Son. The Son is what He is because of the Father..."
19. [2] It's eternal—this is to say—this generation or begottenness—has always existed and it will always exist...
20. From eternity past to eternity future—the first person is always the Father and the second person—the Son...
21. Thus—the Son is not created but begotten—"The Son is from the Father alone, neither made, nor created, but begotten" (The Athanasian Creed)...
22. [3] It's intimate—"the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father"—this language is metaphorical...
23. That is—John uses language familiar to us—to assist us in understanding the intimacy between the Father and Son...
24. The word rendered "bosom" simply refers to the mid-section of a man located between his two arms—the chest...
25. The custom was to recline at meals—so that one person often rested in the bosom of the person next to him...
26. Jn.13:23—"Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved"—that is—John...
27. Thus the point is evident—the Son and Father shared, from all eternity, the closest possible intimacy together...
28. Ryle—"The expression *Which is in the bosom of the Father*, is doubtless a figurative one, mercifully accommodated to man's capacity. As one who lies in the bosom of another is fairly supposed to be most intimate with him, to know all his secrets, and possess all his affections, so is it, we are to understand, in the union of the Father and the Son. It is more close than man's mind can conceive..."
29. Now—before I go further—let me point out that the John speaks of this intimacy as a present and blessed reality...
30. V18—"The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father"—notice the present tense—"who IS in the bosom of the Father..."
31. That is—Christ, as He's the eternally begotten Son of God, always experienced this intimacy throughout His life...
32. Thus—John is here underscoring Christ's qualification for revealing the Father—as He intimately knows the Father...
33. Matt.11:27—"All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and *the one* to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*..."

III. The Son's Declaration of the Father

1. V18—"He has declared Him"—the Gk word rendered "has declared" means—"to explain, unfold, or make known..."
2. Fundamentally, it refers to someone making something clear or known—that previously was unclear or hidden...
3. The only begotten Son of God became flesh—that He would explain or expound the Father—to make Him known...
4. Now—some of you know that we get from this Greek word the word exegesis—which refers to explaining Scripture...

5. The preacher must exegete a text—he must explain its original meaning—he must make clear its true sense...
6. This is why the Word became flesh—to exegete the Father—to make known the Father—to declare the Father...
7. [1] By His teaching—that is—this text is a classic text to illustrate the prophetic work or office of Jesus Christ...
8. [a] Outwardly—that is—one way our Savior came to make the Father known—is through His public teaching...
9. [b] Inwardly—this is really the meaning of our text—He came to earth to make known the Father to His people...
10. Jn.1:9—"That was the true Light which coming into the world, gives light to every man"—spiritual illumination...
11. Ps.22:22—"I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will praise You [Heb.2:12]..."
12. Jn.17:26—"And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare *it*, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them..."
13. [2] By His living—that is—as we behold Christ interacting and performing miracles—we behold God's character...
14. Jn.12:44-46—"Then Jesus cried out and said, He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me. 45 And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me. 46 I have come *as* a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness..."
15. Jn.14:9-10—"Jesus said to him, Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? 10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own *authority*; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works..."
16. [a] His power—throughout our Savior's life He displayed absolute power and authority over every aspect of creation...
17. [b] His holiness—throughout His life we behold a sinlessness in which the purity and holiness of God shines forth...
18. [c] His compassion—that is—we see in Christ the general kindness and goodness of God toward all mankind...
19. [3] By His dying—that is—we not only see the Father through His teaching and living—but especially His dying...
20. For it's here at Calvary that we behold in clearest light—all of the attributes or perfections of God on display [Rom.3:25-26; 5:8]...

IV. Observations

1. [1] God wants to make Himself known—this implies a related observation—man needs a revelation from God...
2. There's not only the distance that exists between the creator and created—but man's a fallen and sinful creature..
3. [2] God can really and savingly be known—this is a wonderful observation that I want to direct toward sinners...
4. God sent His own Son into the world—He came for the specific purpose of explaining or making Him known...
5. [3] God can increasingly be known—this too is a very important observation that I want to direct toward saints...